

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FISCAL NOTE

Department of Commerce

Bill Number: 5472 S SB

Title: Ballot drop boxes

Part I: Jurisdiction-Location, type or status of political subdivision defines range of fiscal impacts.

Legislation Impacts:

- ☐ Cities:
- ☒ Counties: Procurement, maintenance, and operation costs for new ballot boxes.
- ☐ Special Districts:
- ☐ Specific jurisdictions only:
- ☐ Variance occurs due to:

Part II: Estimates

- ☐ No fiscal impacts.
- ☒ Expenditures represent one-time costs: The one-time cost statewide is estimated to be \$1,028,000.
- ☐ Legislation provides local option:
- ☒ Key variables cannot be estimated with certainty at this time: It is unknown which counties would install permanent, temporary, or mobile drop boxes to meet the new requirements.

Estimated revenue impacts to:

None

Estimated expenditure impacts to:

Indeterminate Impact

Part III: Preparation and Approval

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Agency Approval: Steve Salmi	Phone: (360) 725 5034	Date: 04/13/2017
OFM Review: Shane Hamlin	Phone: (360) 902-0547	Date: 04/14/2017

Part IV: Analysis

A. SUMMARY OF BILL

Provide a clear, succinct description of the bill with an emphasis on how it impacts local government.

DIFFERENCES FROM ORIGINAL VERSION:

This version would add the requirement of one ballot drop box per 15,000 registered voters in the county.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT BILL:

This bill would require the county auditor to establish a minimum of one ballot drop box per 15,000 registered voters in the county and a minimum of one ballot drop box in each city, town, and census-designated place in the county with a post office.

B. SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE IMPACTS

Briefly describe and quantify the expenditure impacts of the legislation on local governments, identifying the expenditure provisions by section number, and when appropriate, the detail of expenditures. Delineate between city, county and special district impacts.

This bill would increase county expenditures by an indeterminate amount, due to (1) the requirement of the ballot drop boxes (boxes) being available immediately for each primary, special election, and general election, and (2) it is unknown which type of box would be installed (permanent, temporary, or mobile). This bill would require an additional 257 boxes statewide with an estimated expenditure impact of \$1,285,000 in the first year of total impact, with ongoing costs of \$257,000 per year.

-- To meet the standard of one box per 15,000 registered voters, 33 additional boxes would be needed across four counties (Snohomish, King, Clark, and Benton), according to the Office of the Secretary of State.

-- To meet the standard of one box in each city and town, and census-designated place (CDP) with a post office in the county, 224 additional boxes would be needed statewide.

ASSUMPTIONS:

-- No existing boxes will be moved from their current locations.

-- All 257 boxes will be installed immediately.

-- Every city and town is eligible. There are 289 cities and towns, with 135 requiring an additional box.

-- Every CDP with a post office is eligible. There are 114 CDPs that have a post office statewide, with 89 requiring an additional box.

CDPs include unincorporated villages, groups of villages, commercial developments, and Air Force Bases (AFBs).

-- A post office is any postal site as listed by the United States Postal Service (USPS). A post office does not include any location where USPS uses a contracted service location.

-- County auditors will install a permanent, temporary, or mobile drop box depending upon the needs of the community.

PROCUREMENT COSTS

Procurement costs for each box ranges from \$1,000 to \$2,500. Estimates for box installation range from \$500 to \$7,000, depending on site conditions, labor costs, and location. However, according to the Washington State Association of County Auditors, the typical cost to purchase and install a ballot box (both permanent and temporary) is no more than \$4,000 (statewide figure). For the purposes of this fiscal note, the Local Government Fiscal Note Program estimates the resulting one-time procurement cost to be \$1,028,000 (257 x \$4,000).

Please note each county may choose to use a permanent, temporary, or mobile drop box and this figure assumes only the typical cost.

Certain counties currently provide more than the minimum number of boxes that would be required under this bill. Those counties would not incur procurement costs as a result of this bill.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

In addition to the one-time cost to install the boxes, some counties would incur costs related to staffing the drop boxes. The King County Director of Elections estimates its typical operating cost per box was \$2,547 in 2013. The Pierce County Auditor Office similarly estimated costs of up to \$1,000 per box for each primary and general election, and \$200 per box for each special election. Other counties that rely on volunteers or install no new boxes under the bill would not incur such costs. For the purpose of this fiscal note, it is assumed that the average box has operational costs of \$1,000 per year. Total ongoing operations and maintenance costs would be \$257,000 (257 x \$1,000) per year.

PERMANENT BALLOT DROP BOXES

Procurement costs for each box ranges from \$1,000 to \$2,500. Estimates for box installation range from \$500 to \$7,000, depending on site conditions and labor costs. The expenditure range for one box purchase and installation is \$1,500 to \$9,500.

For an illustration of the impacts on Snohomish County, the Snohomish County Auditor Office reports it would need to install 19 new permanent boxes to meet the requirements. Each box would likely be in an area without an existing structure to secure the new box to. Therefore, the auditor office estimates their one-time costs to be up to \$114,000 (12 x 9,500), plus maintenance costs. The location of the

boxes would not be uniformly distributed across the county or necessarily near population centers due to the description of “census-designated places with a post office.”

TEMPORARY BALLOT DROP BOXES

The Thurston County Auditor Office estimates it costs \$3,545 per box to procure, install, and remove one temporary box. To cover each CDP, the resulting cost would be \$1,230,115 (347 x \$3,545) per election or primary. Temporary boxes would be more costly in areas without existing structures to secure a box to. There would be additional costs for temporary boxes in small towns which do not currently have a box.

MOBILE BALLOT DROP BOXES

The Snohomish County Auditor Office estimates it costs \$165 per day per mobile ballot drop box van, not including staffing or mileage costs. Since these are mobile ballot drop boxes, it is assumed that the box could be moved around to cover the needed CDPs and other required places. The cost to rent one mobile ballot drop box van per day per county would be \$6,435 (39 counties x \$165). However, it is unknown how many such mobile boxes would be required to ensure coverage. Therefore, this estimate is likely lower than the actual costs would be.

There are additional costs for mileage and staffing. These additional costs are illustrated using Snohomish County estimates:

- Mileage to Darrington from auditor office (furthest distance in Snohomish County) = 94.8 miles round trip
- Cost per mile = \$0.17
- Total cost for round trip = \$16.116
- Staffing costs = \$17.40 per hour (includes minimal legally required benefits)
- Total staff time per day = 12 hours
- Total staffing costs per day = \$626.40
- Total cost per day = \$807.52

The Snohomish County Auditor Office stated there may be a slight preference for permanent boxes, because there can be voter confusion and frustration when temporary or mobile boxes are moved. However, siting any ballot box can be difficult, because the box must be generally accessible to the public without creating traffic issues.

TOTAL ELECTION BOXES PER COUNTY REQUIRED:

- Adams: 1
- Asotin: 0
- Benton: 1
- Chelan: 2
- Clallam: 4
- Clark: 13
- Columbia: 0
- Cowlitz: 1
- Douglas: 2
- Ferry: 6
- Franklin: 3
- Garfield: 0
- Grant: 11
- Grays Harbor: 14
- Island: 1
- Jefferson: 3
- King: 41
- Kitsap: 10
- Kittitas: 8
- Klickitat: 2
- Lewis: 8
- Lincoln: 6
- Mason: 2
- Okanogan: 12
- Pacific: 7

-- Pend Oreille: 4
-- Pierce: 16
-- San Juan: 0
-- Skagit: 6
-- Skamania: 0
-- Snohomish: 19
-- Spokane: 9
-- Stevens: 7
-- Thurston: 0
-- Wahkiakum: 1
-- Walla Walla: 3
-- Whatcom: 4
-- Whitman: 14
-- Yakima: 16
-- TOTAL: 257 new election boxes

C. SUMMARY OF REVENUE IMPACTS

Briefly describe and quantify the revenue impacts of the legislation on local governments, identifying the revenue provisions by section number, and when appropriate, the detail of revenue sources. Delineate between city, county and special district impacts.

This bill would have no revenue impact.

SOURCES:

King County Director of Elections
Local Government Fiscal Note HB 2436 (2016)
Municipal Research and Services Center "Washington City and Town Profiles"
Office of the Attorney General
Office of the Secretary of State
Pierce County Auditor Office
Snohomish County Auditor Office
Thurston County Auditor Office
United States Census Bureau "2013 U.S. Gazetteer Files"
United States Census Bureau "Guide to State and Local Census Geography" (2017)
Washington Association of County Auditors
Washington Association of County Officials